

## Testimony on the Governor's Proposed Senior Year Plus Program

Permit me an opportunity to first congratulate the Governor and his staff for presenting a progressive “*Senior-Year Plus*” program. There are many positives in the bill that we solidly endorse, albeit a few concerns remain. The Governor’s initiative is right in line with recommendations from major think tanks and national organizations<sup>1</sup> with supportive research.<sup>2</sup>

Before we get into the specifics of the bill let’s examine why the Senior Year Plus program is an important initiative for Iowa. In addition, I want to provide you an anticipatory set for where we are heading in our testimony.

Hereinafter I refer to “Senior Year Plus” program as “*acceleration*.”

### I. The Intersection of the Community College Mission and Acceleration:

- a. **Access:** The most salient characteristic of community colleges remains that of giving opportunity to all students who wish to pursue a college degree, ensuring that all segments of our citizenry have, in Abraham Lincoln's words, “*the right to rise up.*”
  - i. **Equal Opportunity.** Community Colleges provide all students an opportunity to improve their quality of life. We remove barriers to entrance but not at the expense of standards of excellence.
  - ii. Community College mission statements are founded on providing access to higher education **regardless of location**.
  - iii. The DE-sponsored dual enrollment research, commonly referred to as the Thornton study, demonstrates that Community Colleges are systemically integrated with their high school partners in many ways that have evolved over the last 15 years. This **interwoven fabric of connected and leveraged resources** has produced a complicated and effective delivery system that is linked to long-term goals of making the educational system as **seamless** as possible.
- b. In a few minutes you will see hard evidence for some exceptionally strong outcomes demonstrating that “acceleration” not only **opens the “opportunity door”** for thousands of Iowa students but prepares them for success in the **world of work** and for **post-secondary success**.

### II. The Strategic Role of Acceleration for Iowa’s Future

- a. In addition to providing positive student outcomes for transitioning students for the world of work and post-secondary education, acceleration also has several strategic outcomes for Iowa.

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A: Dual enrollment recommendations: A summary of dual enrollment recommendations from national commissions, think tanks, state organizations and national experts” in Morrison, Michael C. 2007. [The benefits of acceleration: An outcomes analysis of dual enrollment](#).

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix B: Dual enrollment: What Does the research say?” in Morrison, Michael C. 2007. [The benefits of acceleration: An outcomes analysis of dual enrollment](#).

- b. Bureau of Labor statistics forecasts that **2/3 to 3/4 of all new jobs of the future** will require more than a high school diploma and less than a baccalaureate degree.
- c. **Four adverse, perfect storms are looming:**
  - i. **Workforce shortage storm** - adverse workforce shortages are already here!
  - ii. **Educational attainment storm** - lower levels of educational attainment are forecasted for those who will replace the “baby-boomers” in the workplace;
  - iii. **Global competition storm** -- higher levels of education required in a global economy;
  - iv. An **economic system storm** – our economic system is losing ground in the world’s economy.
- d. What does the set of perfect storms mean for our society?
  - i. **Such a ‘perfect storm’ combination means tens of millions of people in the US and thousands in Iowa will be less able to qualify for high paying jobs. Instead they will be competing with each other for low-paying jobs or with equally qualified workers in lower wage economies. This in turn threatens aggregate economic prosperity and attending social consequences, yielding a systemic spiraling down effect.**
- e. It’s in this context that we endorse policy recommendations to **expand acceleration opportunities, the Governor’s senior year plus program:**
  - i. Connect Acceleration to Workforce Development – 260C18.A
  - ii. Connect Acceleration to Competitiveness Agenda
  - iii. Support and Provide Partnerships Incentives
  - iv. Assure State General Aid Funding to Community Colleges

National studies point to the need to produce millions of additional college degree holders.<sup>3</sup> Accelerated programs offered by Community Colleges are viewed as a key strategy to achieve this goal.<sup>4</sup> The highest order of systems thinking is required to assure Iowa remains competitive.

I would now like to refer you to the document titled, “*Outcomes Summary of Accelerated Programs for High School Students.*”

Michael C. Morrison  
 President  
 North Iowa Area Community College

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<sup>3</sup> Preliminary data from the National Center for High Education Management Systems for *Making Opportunity Affordable*, an initiative supported by the Lumina Foundation for Education.

<sup>4</sup> Hoffman, N., Vargas, J., Venezia, A., and Miller, M.S. (2007). *Minding the Gap: Why Integrating High School with College Makes Sense and How to Do It*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.